

Friends Make Garbage (Good Friends Take it Out) by Your Iron Lung

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Summary: A series of one-shots based on user submitted prompts I received from Tumblr focusing on the relationship between Billy and Steve, both in platonic and romantic settings. I am open to taking prompts, so if you want to leave one in the reviews, I may or may not get around to filling it. Feel free to follow me on my writing tumblr [your-iron-lung](#) if you want to submit via anon.

1. Bruises (Amethyst)

A/N: Prompt from manomynousworld on tumblr: Locker room and Shower after basket ball

There's a line drawn horizontally across Billy's back that Steve's not sure he knows is there. It's spread out just above his shoulder blades in a deep, dark shade of purple that draws Steve's eye to it every time he has to chase Billy down the court to fight for ball control. He's sure that if Billy knew it was there, he probably would have been playing with his shirt on. It's apparent he doesn't know the bruise is there, and nobody tells him about it until after they finish their scrimmage.

"Damn Billy, you got bitches desperate enough for your cock they manhandling you for it now?"

It's Tommy who mentions it first, slapping a hand to his shoulder in congratulations as they finally file into the locker room after practice. Billy looks confused at first, but plays it cool as he changes out of his shorts, draping a towel around his waist. "You know how sluts are, man. Never can get enough."

Steve notices the way his face falls after Tommy walks away, lumbering towards the showers to brag about Billy's conquests for him. Once he's gone, he watches as Billy cranes his neck over his shoulder, trying to see what Tommy was referring to. No matter how he twists his body though, the bruise remains just outside of his line of sight.

"It's just above your shoulders," Steve says at last as he pulls his sweat-soaked shirt over his head. "The bruise, I mean."

Billy stiffens at the sound of his voice and stops trying to twist his head around his neck like some sort of Exorcist parody. He makes eye contact with Steve and shoots him an angry look, as though Steve been the one to leave the mark upon him.

The rest of their teammates are already in the shower, leaving the

two of them alone in the changing area. Steve's half-expecting a fight as Billy steps up into his personal space, his eyebrows drawn in tightly together as he flicks his tongue out and drags them across his teeth.

"Show me," he says, and turns so that his back is exposed to Steve. "Trace it out for me, Harrington."

Steve's too surprised to move for a moment.

"Uh, alright," he says quietly, setting his shirt aside on a nearby bench.

Staring at the broad expanse of Billy's back, Steve can see a much fainter bruise in the same shape and size a little lower down, marking his lower-back as well. It looks like Billy's been shoved into some shelves or something, and as he hesitantly presses a finger to his shoulder, he wonders who in the world could possibly possess that sort of power over him.

He begins to drag his finger across his skin lightly, dragging it along the line the bruise makes slowly. "It starts here, and goes all the way over to here," he mutters, keeping his voice low as he makes a trail through the sweat that's accumulated between his shoulder blades, mapping out the bruise.

Steve doesn't miss the way Billy shudders at the contact and can't help the way his heart-rate begins to pick up.

Billy's about to step away when Steve grips his shoulder tightly, keeping him in place.

"What the fuck Harrington-" Billy begins to say testily, his voice rumbling out of his chest menacingly.

"There's another one," Steve says quickly before Billy can confront him. "Lower down."

"Fuck," Billy mumbles. He stays still, shoulders slumping a bit as Steve trails his palm down the crevice of his back, resting it over where the second bruise lies.

"This one's really faint," he explains, tracing it out with his thumb, stepping in close so that their bodies are almost touching.

Billy's skin is smooth under his touch, unblemished by any skin condition typical of teenagers their age. There are no moles or freckles; the only things tarnishing his skin being the bruises he's somehow acquired. He's staring now, he knows, as his eyes dip down to where the towel he's wearing hides the swell of his ass.

Steve wants to spread both of his hands out all across him, fingers twitching at the skin under his palms before the voices from the other boys in the shower come back to reach him. He abruptly steps back and pulls his hands away, staring forlornly at the body he can only touch in his mind.

He finishes undressing hurriedly, leaving Billy alone to catch a shower before anyone from their team notices that the two of them are missing simultaneously. Billy watches him go, a dark expression of longing crossing his features momentarily before he decides to follow after him, wondering when he'd given Steve the power to make him feel better about the bruises Neil gives him.

2. She's So Unusual

A/N: Prompt from digitaldevilqueen on Tumblr: Steve finds Cyndi Lauper albums in Billy's locker/bag/room

"Backseat."

Max stopped moving, already halfway into the passenger seat of Billy's car when he spoke. She got back out and cast Billy a questioning look, but he wasn't paying attention to her. Leaning against the driver's side door of his Camaro, Billy was smoking languidly and looking out across the parking lot disinterestedly.

"What?" she asked, frowning when he didn't acknowledge her.

"Backseat," he repeated calmly, turning to give her a stern look that dared her to ask him again. She huffed out in annoyance and tossed her hair over her shoulder, channeling her irritation into throwing the passenger seat forward. She crawled into the cramped confines of the backseat, muttering curses under her breath as she dragged her book bag in after her and set the seat back into its standard position.

Ignoring whatever the hell she was mumbling about, Billy redirected his attention to surveying the parking lot, throwing the butt of his cigarette away once he'd smoked it down to the filter.

"What are we waiting for?" he heard Max ask, leaning forward between the two front seats to stare at him. "You always bitch me out for being late, and now I'm on time and you don't want to leave?"

The impatience in her voice made him scowl. He turned around to face her through the driver's side window, leaning down low enough to look in at her with his arm draped atop the hood for support. He glared at her evenly, which in turn made her to sigh angrily and sit back with her arms crossed across her chest. She stuck her lip out in a pout and glowered out the window.

Billy rolled his eyes and stood back up when he heard someone approaching him from behind. He turned around in time to see Steve

hustling towards him, his hair bobbing up and down as he alternated between walking and jogging awkwardly.

"Sorry, sorry," he panted when he got closer, flashing Billy an apologetic smile. "English teacher held me late."

"What is with you people thinking I give a shit?"

Steve shrugged as he rounded the front of the Camaro to the passenger side, pulling the door open effortlessly and dumping himself gracelessly into the seat. "Fuck me for trying to talk about my day then, I guess. Hey, Max," he said, turning in his seat to smile and wave at the girl in the back.

"Hi, Steve." She smiled at him briefly in return before Billy got into the driver's seat and swung his bag into Steve, who let out a forced 'oof' as it made contact with his stomach.

They peeled out of the parking lot abruptly as soon as Billy started the engine, barely missing a couple of kids who were walking by. Steve quickly buckled his seat belt, dropping his school bag onto the floor between his feet as he held Billy's in his lap.

"Why are we giving Steve a ride?" Max asked, leaning forward between the two seats again casually as the Camaro rocketed out of the parking lot and onto the main road.

"My car's in the shop and Johnathan lives too far out of the way to give me a ride home," Steve explained, his hands clenching Billy's bag tensely as they sped down the narrow two-lane road. "Plus we were gonna hang out afterwards, so-"

"Harrington," Billy hissed in warning, turning a dark look on him that Steve ignored. "Sit back, Max."

"Why do you want to hang out with Billy?" Max asked incredulously, shaking her head as she sat back against the seat cushion. She honestly had a hard time believing anyone would want to willingly spend their free time hanging out with him. He'd been easier on her since the incident at the Byers' house, given, but he was still an asshole to pretty much everyone else.

Steve merely shrugged in lieu of providing her with an actual response, mindful of the way Billy was side-eying him, mentally strong-arming him into not answering her questions.

The rest of the drive to the Hargrove house was spent in silence, with Billy focused on driving, Steve focused on not having a heart attack at the way Billy drove, and Max focused on staring out the window when no one would talk to her.

When they got to the house, Billy pulled up to the curb beside their driveway and jerked the Camaro's transmission into park, letting the car idle as Steve made to unbuckle his seat-belt. Max waited patiently, watching him with some level of amusement as he struggled with the buckle until it finally clicked and released.

Unused to being so low to the ground in the Camaro, he swung the door open awkwardly and stumbled out onto the curb. Billy's bag spilled out of his lap and onto the sidewalk, emptying its contents all over the ground.

Billy turned at the sound, furrowing his brow as Steve quickly pulled the seat forward to both block his vision and let Max out. "What was that?"

"Dropped my shit," Steve said, shooting a pleading glance to Max for her to keep quiet as she helped him gather up Billy's belongings, stuffing them back into the bag hurriedly.

That was when his hand closed over something hard. Confused, he held up a cassette tape that was still in its case and became even more confused when he saw who the artist was. Max was staring at it too, and, under the assumption that it must have been hers, Steve handed it over to her.

"That's not mine," she whispered before breaking out into a huge shit-eating grin. "Oh my God, I think that's Billy's. It came out of his bag!"

"No fucking way," Steve said, mirroring her grin with one of his own. "Billy listens to Cyndi Lauper?"

"The fuck you two doing down there?" Billy called out from where he

was still seated behind the wheel. "If you wanted to spend the afternoon eating dirt, Harrington, I would've put you down there earlier."

"Holy shit," Steve whispered, trying to suppress a laugh as he slipped the cassette back into Billy's bag and stood up. Max followed him up, laughing quietly under her breath.

"I've gotta go," she said, stepping up the walkway to her house a little bit as she raised her eyebrows at Billy, who was looking the other way. "But you better give him hell for that."

"Way ahead of you, kid," Steve replied, giving her a wink before she retreated fully into her home.

Sliding the seat into position, Steve got back in the Camaro and waited till Billy had started driving again before he decided to say anything about it.

"So, now that Max is gone," he began, fingering the hem of Billy's schoolbag in anticipation. "Can I tell you something... unusual?"

"You gonna tell me you love me now or some shit?" Billy sounded bored, unfazed by Steve's choice of words. He kept his eyes trained on the road, navigating them around a curve at a speed Steve still hadn't gotten used to traveling at.

"Gross, no."

"You wound me, Harrington."

"Whatever, anyway, you know how my parents are out of town, right?" Steve asked, fighting the urge to break out into an amused smirk.

"That is kind of the whole reason we're going to your house in the first place," Billy reminded him, looking at him in confusion for a brief moment. "You said we could use your parents' water bed this time to-"

"RIGHT, well," Steve interrupted loudly, fighting a blush that threatened to cover his face. He had to clear his throat before he

could continue. "Well, last night uh, my dad called me up. In the middle of the night."

Steve was looking at Billy closely, watching for any sign that would give him away. To his credit though, Billy had an incredible poker face. There were no tells in his face that alluded to the fact that he might have known what Steve was trying to get at, but Steve had known that about him already. Instead he was watching his hands, looking to them for a tell of some sort and got exactly what he was looking for.

Billy's fingers twitched and tightened across the steering wheel, gripping it in a strong fist. He remained suspiciously quiet as Steve continued talking.

"So he calls me in the middle of the night, right, and then he just starts yelling! Starts going off on me, asking me what I'm gonna do with my life," Steve said, speaking excitedly and gesturing with his hands to tell his fabricated story. Billy's fists had begun to shake. "And then he starts talking about my mom, just going on and on about how.... she's... so... unusual."

Billy's poker face broke as he turned to look at Steve sharply. Here Steve let himself smile, and from inside Billy's bag he pulled out the Cyndi Lauper 'She's So Unusual' album on cassette, holding it up for him to see clearly.

"That's not mine," Billy said quickly, turning away and licking his lips nervously, his face beginning to turn red. "Must be Max's; little shit must have left it when she got out."

"Oh, I don't think so, Hargrove," Steve cackled, unable to keep his laughter at bay any longer. "It came out of your bag! It fell out when I got out of the car; you listen to Cyndi Lauper!"

Too engrossed with his laughter to care about the way Billy's face had darkened with his embarrassment, Steve wasn't prepared for the way the car swerved abruptly across the road. He cursed, tears in his eyes as the momentum drove him back into his seat.

"If you tell anyone" Billy hissed, glaring ahead of him with a manic

look in his eye, "and I mean anyone, I will fucking kill you."

In that instant, Steve had no doubt that he would. Billy was getting better at handling his rages, but they still managed to frighten him at times, and as they sped carelessly through the streets where the speed limit was definitely 35 and not a solid 60, he found that this was one of those times.

"Jesus Christ, I won't tell," he said, still laughing slightly in spite of himself as they peeled through his neighborhood, roaring up his driveway so fast he thought Billy was going to crash them into the garage door. Before they made impact, Billy slammed on the brakes so hard they screamed, locking the tires in place as they slid across the pavement to leave deep, black tread marks behind them.

The engine of the Camaro rumbled smoothly as it idled, the nose of the car almost pressed up flush against the Harrington's garage. Steve's humor left him as he quickly exited the Camaro to inspect the markings.

"Was that really necessary?" he snapped after he'd assessed the damage, standing in the opening of the passenger side to glare in at Billy, who sat in his seat calmly, looking up at him innocently as though he hadn't just tried to put them through the garage door.

"Absolutely," he said, snickering as Steve ran a hand through his hair and grumbled about how his parents were most assuredly going to blame him for this when they came home. "No one laughs at Cyndi."

3. I Believe Jesus Brought Us Together

A/N: this ones a sequel to the first prompt in this... compilation? anthology? SERIES? what do you call something like this

"Keep your shirt on."

Billy brushes past him without looking at him, speaking in a low growl as he is heralded to the basketball court by his entourage. He speaks quietly, bumping into Steve's shoulder to make sure he's the only one who can hear him as he whispers the rough command under his breath. It's enough to make Steve pause, shirt half-off and almost pulled completely over his head. He lets it drop, sliding back over his body slowly, covering his torso whole.

Despite the act of aggression, Billy's words aren't a threat; they aren't even a cheap gibe to rile Steve up before the scrimmage, or an attempt to flaunt his strength in front of his peers, but serve instead as a warning, of sorts. Steve watches Billy go, already laughing and taunting his other classmates, his own shirt clinging tightly to his chest.

Steve's confused for about half a second before he remembers-remembers with stunning clarity the way Billy's body shook under his touch as he traced out the bruises that marred his beautiful skin. However many weeks ago, when he learned what made the shirt so necessary for Billy to sometimes have to wear.

Passively Steve reaches out to touch his shoulder, suddenly aware of Billy's generosity with the favor he's repaid in kind.

A week ago, his kid friends found a dog. A nasty one. Big, bloated, and vicious as ever. He'd volunteered himself to take care of it, but there'd been more than one. He should've known better, honestly, but what they hadn't known at the time was that these dogs weren't *new*; they hadn't broken through the rift and traveled to their dimension on their own, but instead were the corpses of the dogs they'd already taken care of, revived by some lingering shred of evil that had escaped imprisonment. They hadn't accounted for *that* in their master

plan.

They'd taken him off guard, and Dustin's screams of warning had come too late as a massively dense hulk of rotted flesh body-slammed into his back and tried to rip his head off. He'd survived the encounter, but only barely.

Steve honestly thought his back had been broken after that, and his body even today remains sore. Standing alone in the locker room, he wonders how on earth he could have forgotten the giant bruise he'd been left with.

He can't see the whole thing, though, even as he tries; lifting up the edge of his shirt and contorting his body around to try and catch visions of the grossly huge blemish in the bathroom mirror. The sounds of his classmates running each other down on the court reaches him distantly, but he's already tuned them out by the time he sees Billy, lingering behind him by an open stall.

Not even yet sweaty, Billy's eye is drawn to Steve's skin, where the bottom of the bruise is exposed from under the swathe of fabric.

There's a look on his face that Steve finds he can't quite describe as he steps closer, and wordlessly Steve pulls the shirt up and over his head to let him see the whole of it. He feels vulnerable, but knows Billy wants to see it fully; wants to compare their tragedies, apples to apples.

From the mirror Steve can see the different expressions that cross Billy's face, ranging from confusion to sympathy and anger before he finally speaks, quietly asking in a voice far softer than Steve thought he was ever capable of producing, "Who?"

But there is no 'who' for Steve; only *what*- a nameless *what* that he's sworn to keep secret, and so he stumbles, hesitates, and can't find a way to answer Billy when his eyes look away from his back and into the reflection of his own.

"Um," Steve responds, eyes darting away from where they meet Billy's in the mirror. He shifts his weight, his shirt hanging off his arms as he shakes his head, trying to think of something- *anything*- to say.

"It's- just, y'know. One of those things."

He tries to smile and laugh it off, but his voice breaks unexpectedly.

"Was it one of the guys? Tommy?" Billy asks, but retracts his words almost instantly with a shake of his head. He stares somberly at the bruise that is deep purple in colour and asks in a dreadfully quiet voice that sounds almost... *hopeful*, despite its implications: "Was it... was it your dad?"

Steve swallows hard and tilts his head up to gaze pleadingly at the ceiling, hating the way he can't find words to refute whatever it is Billy is trying to find in him, but he still, *still* cannot find the words. All he needs to say is 'no', but his heart is filled with such sorrow for the boy at his back that he can't even manage that.

They each had secrets to keep, but here Billy was, about to spill his in the false belief that Steve's injuries might be related to his own. And sure, Steve's dad is an asshole, but he hasn't *hit* him since he was a child, and even then it had never... never been...

"Listen, Billy-" he starts to say, attempting to turn around and face him, but Billy's hands on his shoulders, calloused, warm, and not nearly as rough as he thought they'd be keep him in place. The words 'I just can't talk about it' die on his tongue as he catches Billy's look of subdued admiration in the mirror.

"It's kinda pretty." Billy's hands slide from Steve's freckled shoulders down to his back, gently, *gently* touching the bruised skin. It's his turn to swallow his reserve down as he peers over Steve's shoulder and into his sorrowful eyes. "Like you."

Steve's heart begins to race as Billy leans forward to press his lips to his skin, kissing the bruise- kissing *him* - reverently.

He pulls away before Steve can react, and this time when Steve tries to turn to face him, he doesn't hold him in place. Steve watches as Billy looks at him, hesitates, and then takes his shirt off, revealing a cluster of bruises on his abdomen near his stomach.

The sight of them, all brown, yellowish, and small is enough to make

Steve's stomach drop. The revelation is so sincere, and Billy has never appeared more vulnerable.

Apples to apples, bruises to bruises, and Billy's have nothing in common with his own.

He steps forward, prepared to drop to his knees so he can kiss the battered skin the same way Billy had kissed his own, but the screeching sounds of sneakers skidding along the basketball court stills him. Steve stays hunched, fingertips pressed to the taut muscle as he looks away towards the locker room entrance, aware of how easily they could be exposed in this moment. Billy's eyes follow his, and he steps out of reach before either of them can act further. Steve lets his fingers curl back into his palm like the legs of a dead spider as Billy casually begins to redress and gestures for him to do the same.

"Let's get out of here," he says, already walking to his locker to take out his things. He pulls out his car keys and holds them up for Steve to see and jingles them enticingly.

Steve knows he should tell him the truth of his injury, but also knows he can't. He watches the keys clink together, can hear the dull thudding of a basketball being dribbled hard against the wood, and can see the almost desperate look of need to find something they could share between them illuminated in Billy's eyes from the shitty overhead fluorescent lights.

He pretends he doesn't have a conscience; pretends he can't feel the guilt.

"My parents aren't home," Steve says while trying to crack a smile. "We can go there."

4. Great Expectations

a/n: anonymous request sent in response to a list of prompts to include specific lines of dialogue in a fic; this one includes:

12. "Don't you trust me?"

40. "I wasn't lying when I said that I loved you."

41. "Don't be afraid."

The roadtrip had been Steve's idea; to leave their cat and apartment behind for a few weeks so they could drive out to California in Billy's old Camaro to celebrate their two year anniversary had seemed like a *great* idea when he'd thought about it.

And so far, it had been.

Playing shitty car games to pass the time as they drove past rolling sceneries, visiting landmarks they didn't care about just for the hell of it, stopping at obvious tourist traps together to mock the idiotic displays and even pulling off to the side of the road that one time to watch a tornado as it spiraled in the distance, sitting on the hood of the car to watch it move as they'd driven through Kansas- it was all so *perfect*. It felt like they'd grown closer in the weeks they'd spent traveling, and it was all so much better than any physical gift Steve could have ever offered up for the occasion.

And then there was Billy: beautiful, radiant, and *sublime*. Driving with the windows down, letting his hair blow wild in the wind as he sped along the back roads they'd elected to take, comfortable behind the wheel of his own car. Free at last from the constraints of a home life that had been too cruel to him, finally making the journey back to his origins.

It was better than Steve could have ever planned for.

They were part way through Colorado, the mid-western sun slowly descending against the backdrop of mountains they were steadily winding through when Steve said it.

"I love you."

Billy's profile, handsome and regal beyond compare, illuminated by the sunset, suddenly turned to look at him. Steve smiled, pleased that he was finally able to say what he'd been feeling for so long, but Billy looked stricken. His face contorted, a mixture of emotions crossing his face that floundered between being upset and angry.

Steve's self-satisfied smile fell away.

"What?" Billy asked, voice strained as his grip on the wheel tightened. "What the fuck did you just say to me?"

That old anger they'd been working on tamping down together surfaced quickly. Billy kept turning his head to glance at the road and back to Steve, waiting for him to explain himself, but Steve couldn't understand what the problem was.

"I... said I love you?"

Billy held his gaze for one long, hard second, his nostrils flaring as his breathing became steadily more erratic.

"Look, Billy, *calm down*, it's not a big deal-" Steve started to say, but was cut off when Billy swerved hard enough that his seat belt locked up and cut off his words. A jolt of fear passed through him as Billy ran the Camaro off the road, pulling off to the shoulder to come to a hard stop that again had Steve's chest straining against the seat belt's restraint.

"What the fuck, Billy?!" Steve shouted once the dust had settled, trying to unclip the buckle to relieve the pressure. "We're driving through a fucking *mountain* range, you can't be doing shit like that!"

He tore his seat belt off, slinging it to the side so hard the metal buckle clinked loudly against the window as it wound itself back up. Steve ran a shaky hand through his hair, oblivious to the way Billy himself was shaking.

It'd been a long time since Billy had had an outburst like that, and the fact that he'd had one over something Steve had felt so right in finally saying was hurtful. He didn't understand the anger.

"Why did you say that?" Billy asked after a moment. His voice was

tense and hard, his gaze fixed firmly forward.

"Because I do?" Steve took a deep breath and sat back in his seat. He listened to the sound of other cars passing them on the highway and tried to calm down, running his hand through his hair again. "I said I loved you and you acted like I'd killed the cat or something!"

"Leave Mr. Sparkles out of this," Billy said sharply. His knuckles were white as they gripped the steering wheel, Steve noticed. His arms were trembling.

"What is this?" Steve asked, lowering his voice out of concern. "What's going on?"

Billy shook his head instead of replying, uncurling his fingers from around the wheel after a moment. He sniffed hard, and Steve realized he'd begun to cry.

"What, **don't you trust me** enough to talk about it?" Steve asked, reaching out to take hold of Billy's arm supportively. "C'mon, Billy, tell me what's on your mind; **don't be afraid** to tell me what you're thinking."

Billy shook his head again and directed his gaze out the window, towards the sun that had very nearly finished in its descent. The bright orange overtones that had brought out the colour in Billy's hair were steadily being replaced by darker hues of blue. Billy wiped his nose on the back of his hand and took a deep, shuddery breath. He clicked his tongue, tried to speak, but couldn't. He cleared his throat and tried again.

"What is this trip really about, Harrington?" he asked, his voice breaking over the words like an ocean wave across the shore.

"What?"

"You wanna bring me out to Cali to what, fuck with me? Bring me all the way home just to *leave* me or some shit?"

He shrugged out of Steve's grip, sullenly turning to look at Steve. There was anger in his red-rimmed eyes; anger and distrust.

"Okay," Steve began to say, lowering his hand and for all the world looking like he'd just been told he only had three days left to live, "I don't know how you got that from me saying *I love you*, but that's not at all what this trip is about? Why would you even think that? We have a *cat* together; I'm not about to put Mr. Sparkles through that kind of emotional strain."

He smiled a little bit, hoping to raise one out of Billy as well but his lips remained fixed in a stubborn, downturned frown.

"Billy, **I wasn't lying when I said that I loved you**, alright? There's something deeper going on here with you that I think you need to get out before you start making those kinds of sadistic assumptions about me. I would *never* do something like that to you."

The anger harbored in his bright blue eyes slowly ebbed away until there was nothing left but vulnerability. The tenseness in his shoulders dropped and he slouched back in his seat, defeated.

"The last person who said they loved me was my mom," Billy admitted eventually. His voice was haggard and low, and Steve finally understood where his hurt and anger was coming from. "And *she* left me, so I guess, why wouldn't you?" Thin lines of tears leaked from his eyes, trailing down the sides of his face. "You just took me by surprise, Harrington, that's all."

"I'm sorry," Steve said, and leaned over between the seats to try and grab Billy in an awkward hug. Billy let himself be pulled into it, and weakly reached his arms around to hold Steve in return. "I'm sorry you got so little love in your life that this had to be your first response."

Billy choked on a sob.

"We're going to Cali to get closure, Billy. I'm not taking you out there for a reenactment."

Steve felt Billy shudder in his arms before he eventually pulled back, sniffing hard and wiping his eyes. He sighed shakily once he'd regained some semblance of composure and sat in his seat looking small and apologetic.

"I'm sorry," he said after a minute. "I didn't mean to think- Fuck, I mean, look, Harrington, it's hard for me to say shit like that but- God. Fuck. I-"

"It's okay; I don't need to hear it to know you do," Steve filled in for him. Billy looked relieved. "Anyway, sun went down, so it's my turn to drive. Move over Hargrove, Peace needs her real daddy behind the wheel."

Billy groaned loudly but broke out into a smile.

"We never agreed to name her 'Peace', asshole," he said as he undid his seat belt and got ready to make the swap.

"C'mon, it's right there on her license plate- she practically named herself! 'P-C-E', Peace!"

"That came from the DMV, she had no say in what she got," Billy scoffed, stepping out of the car.

"Well," Steve began as he opened the car door and stepped out into the cool Colorado air, "that's just too damn bad. You got to name Mr. Sparkles, so I get 'Peace'."

Billy rolled his eyes as they met at the hood. Steve grinned and went in for a kiss, placing his lips to Billy's with a quickly murmured 'love you' before they re-entered the car and continued on their way.

5. I Don't Want to Die in the Hospital

a/n: another anon request sent in response to a list of prompts to include specific lines of dialogue in a fic; this one includes:

15. "Shouldn't you be with him/her?"

67. "I'm right where I belong."

check me at my writing tumblr at your-iron-lung

It felt like everyone at the hospital was determined to give Steve the run around when it came to locating Billy. No matter who he asked-nurse, orderly, doctor- *no one* would tell him where Billy was being held.

"On the third floor, I think."

"Hargrove'? I don't think we're treating anyone with that name here, but if you ask-"

No one seemed to know anything. It drove him wild, checking every lead he was given as he jogged up and down the stair levels, forcing himself to go on foot because waiting around in an elevator made his anxiety worse. But every floor he visited was bereft of Billy's presence, and everyone he asked offered him no answers.

"Billy Hargrove? Isn't he the one that died?"

"No," Steve said, ignoring the sensation of his entire body going numb at the male nurse's words. "No, he's the one that *almost* died. They said he was being treated-"

"Are you sure you're in the right place?"

"Yes?" The thought had never crossed his mind. "I mean, I think so; they said he was being treated here-"

The nurse shrugged. "Who's 'they'? He might've been transferred, you know. It's possible he *was* being treated here, but with the shape we're in, and the state *he* was in, he was probably better off being taken somewhere else. Indianapolis maybe? Check with the people

downstairs, they could probably tell you."

It seemed endless. Another lead for another loop that never seemed to want to close. He thanked the man for his time and hit the stairs running, taking them as fast as he could without risking spraining his ankle. He was out of breath by the time he hit the secretary's station. When he asked her about the possibility of Billy being transferred, she miraculously confirmed it. He'd been taken upstate about two days ago.

"They didn't tell you?" She asked with a frown, taking in his frantic nature and his labored breathing. "You're his brother and they didn't bother telling you where they took him?"

"Well, I was out of it for a couple of days myself," Steve explained hurriedly, gesturing briefly to his face. The nurse behind the desk hm'd in response. "We were both in the mall when it came down, working overtime. But you've been a big help, thank you," he said, and ran outside, got in his car, and began the two hour drive.

He drove recklessly at first, frantic in his need and desire to see that Billy was indeed alive and well before he managed to calm down. Time seemed to scrape by sluggishly, but he maintained his cool. Steve turned on the radio, rolled down the windows, and focused on his breathing.

When he finally made it to the city, he got lost almost instantly. Being as unfamiliar with the area that he was, he had no idea where the general hospital was. The frantic energy he'd thus far been successful in taming crept back until he finally sucked up his pride and pulled over to ask for directions.

Two blocks that way. Take a left. Three blocks and a right and you'll find the parking deck. About a hundred feet till the hospital from there.

It felt like he couldn't get there fast enough.

After he parked he tried to keep his composure, but every other step he took turned into a jog as he walked from the big brick deck to the hospital. When he approached the secretary's desk this time, he was

given a definite answer.

"Your brother's on floor four, room 409."

He was out of breath and almost crying by the time he reached the right floor. He hoped Max or his dad wouldn't be in the room with him as he drew closer, checking the number plates on the door before finally, *finally* coming to Billy's room.

His hand shook as he opened the door slowly. The room was blessedly empty as he stepped inside and let the door click shut behind him.

The tears he'd been trying to hold back slipped out of his eyes gently as he beheld Billy lying in the bed, tubes out of his arms and hooked up to so many machines. The TV mounted on the wall across from the bed was turned on but muted, and as Steve crept closer, pulling up a chair, he noticed that his beloved was awake and looking at him, eyes unfocused from all the drugs he must've been on.

"Hey," Steve said, cracking a smile as he pulled up a chair.

"Steve," Billy slurred, and Steve had never been so happy to be recognized. "What're you doin' here?"

"Why wouldn't I be?" Steve wiped away the snot that had begun to leak from his nose on the back of his arm.

In bed, Billy licked his lips and closed his eyes sleepily. "**Shouldn't you be with Robin?**"

Steve huffed out a silent laugh and shook his head, gingerly reaching out to take Billy's hand in his.

"Nah man, Robin's alright. **I'm right where I belong.**"

He squeezed Billy's fingers in his hand gently, mindful of the main IV line protruding from the back of his hand.

"**I'm right where I belong,**" he repeated, noticing the way Billy's lips curved up into a gentle smile. "I'm here with you."